



Greater Michigan Construction Academy

# **Statement for the Record for Greater Michigan Construction Academy**

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***Testimony of Jimmy E Greene, CEO/President***

***Before the Michigan Senate Committee on  
Economic Development and International Investment***

***On***

***“Preparing Today's Students for Tomorrow's Apprenticeship  
Jobs in the Skilled Trades***

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**May 7, 2015**

Chairman Horn, and members of the Committee; Good morning and thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today on "Preparing Today's Students for Tomorrow's Apprenticeships in the Commercial Construction Skilled Trades sector."

My name is Jimmy Greene. I serve as the CEO & President of the ABC-affiliated Greater Michigan Construction Academy, a 501c3 State Proprietary School and a Federally Accredited Training Facility in Midland & Lansing. As Mr. Fisher stated, our primary function since 1975 here in Michigan has indeed been to **Engage** companies that want safe and quality training for their employees, **Educate** those employees with a Nationally certified apprenticeship training program and most importantly to provide for **Employment** opportunities and fill employment gaps in the commercial construction sector. Mr. Fisher has already stated the case very well on the increasing demand for a trained workforce. Today I will focus on some of the good things that are already happening here in Michigan. Our primary task at the Greater Michigan Construction Academy is providing that training opportunity now in 11 different trades for over 300 construction firms throughout our footprint. We are proud to train that workforce. Since 1983, Independent auditors have shown that ABC Greater Michigan Chapter member contractors and industry-related partners have privately funded several million of dollars in training costs.

While Mr. Fisher did an exceptional job nationalizing this issue I would like to localize it to demonstrate what is possible and where potential solutions for collaboration between private and business entities coexist to both train and fill the Skilled Trades gap. Since 1985; our training facility and instruction by some of the most qualified instructors in the U.S, we have partnered with a Fortune 50 company in our backyard; Dow Chemical to deliver apprenticeship training that has translated into over 2-3 million man hours inside Dow's plant operations per year. Long before STEM became a buzzword for many; working with and in Dow Chemical's rigid standards for both safety and competency; we've taught those principles as a necessary component in carpentry, insulation, pipe-fitting, electrical, welding, and many other trades. Contrary to the old stereotype, skilled trades are not the place for less than proficient student. Leading Michigan companies, both large and small, not only appreciate that fact, but support it in its support for our training. That kind of training creates a worker that receives not just higher wages and experience but

more job satisfaction, greater job retention and a much safer work environment.

Over time, many other partners have entered into the equation; The Midland County School District's Superintendents under the guidance of The Midland ESA Superintendent. The Greater Michigan Construction Academy now offers construction craft education programs at its Midland training center for any interested Junior or Senior in the County High Schools; Midland Dow, Midland High, Coleman, Bullock Creek, & Meridian. By utilizing our facilities funded by ABC members and our training partners, The Greater Michigan Construction Academy serves as the lead training partner for skilled trades. Midland County schools are now focused on leveraging capacity at high schools as well as leveraging assets such as facilities and funding. Training schedules have been amended to accommodate the District's students, giving us the opportunity to compress schedules for industry based certifications (NCCER). We are also seeing opportunities open up in other places across Michigan.

Currently, our training centers have a combined enrollment of more than 300 high school and adult students attending either at day or night. A junior attending our academy during the day with credit hours; graduates from high school with 1 ½ years of Apprenticeship training under their belt at 17 or 18 years of age. Their value to a potential employer is immediate.

As we bring consistency and transferability to the curriculum that training providers use in the classrooms and labs, we blend classroom instruction with hands-on training that articulates to post-secondary credentials and community college programs. Aligning industry-recognized curriculum with community and trade schools, high schools, and The Greater Michigan Construction Academy students and instructors can easily transition from one provider to another depending on personal needs and capacity requirements. Just last week the Academy was granted a \$317,000 from the Midland based Herbert & Grace Dow Foundation to construct a state of the art new Welding Lab to ready students into the trades.

Indeed, there are many opportunities that exist, and we believe this can be emulated elsewhere. However, to emulate this elsewhere, as well as to continue promoting what is already happening, we do think there is a need to provide for financial assistance for post- high school students to attend State Proprietary, Vocational and Trade Schools, just as we do for other continuing educational options following high school. Providing more career path choices for all of our state's children, and not just for those that are college bound, is essential. I believe that there is an economic and workforce development renaissance in Michigan and that the career and technical education is a key ingredient to our success as a state. And it is a training renaissance that can benefit our youth, not to mention, our minority population, underemployed and unemployed adults to help build that new infrastructure. We are on the cusp of doing our part to rebuild our middle class by putting people to work in high paying careers in construction. There is a lot of opportunity and we greatly appreciate the importance this is being given by the State Senate today.

On behalf of ABC and our affiliated Greater Michigan Construction Academy and its staff and Board of Directors, I'd like to thank the Committee for holding today's hearing on this important subject. Mr. Chairman, this concludes my formal remarks. I am prepared to answer any questions you and the other members of the Committee may have.